



ADDRESSING
POLITICAL STALEMATE
AND ENHANCING
WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION
IN POST-WAR LEBANON

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Executive Summary

The Observatory of Violence Against Women in Politics (Marsad VAWP) is a project implemented by Maharat and Madanyat associations, with support from UN Women and funding from the Republic of France. The project aims to monitor and assess the impact of ongoing crises on women in politics.

The third phase of the Observatory project aims to document and track the effects of the ongoing political and economic crises, particularly in light of the recent war. The report prepared by Madanyat Association focuses on studying the current situation, specifically whether women's work has shifted from the political sphere to relief work, or whether some have abandoned political activism due to increased pressures. Will this shift lead to an increase in their leadership role in humanitarian work, or will it lead to a decline in their political aspirations?

This report highlights women's readiness to return to the political arena after the crisis ends, including those currently working outside the public service sphere. However, political instability and deeply rooted social norms have contributed to exacerbating violence against women in politics (VAWP), making it difficult for women to remain active in the political field. The hostile environment, characterized by harassment, threats, and marginalization, leads to the exclusion of women from leadership positions and limits their ability to continue political work.

Furthermore, violence against women in politics is directly related to the reluctance of political parties to nominate women, as they are often seen as more vulnerable to political attacks or lacking the support networks necessary to face Lebanon's unstable political landscape. This systematic marginalization, along with media bias and institutional obstacles, reinforces a cycle of exclusion that pushes many women either into less visible roles, such as relief work, or to completely withdraw from political life.

Within the framework of our ongoing partnership in the Marsad VAWP project, this report provides strategic recommendations to address these challenges, emphasizing the need to integrate women's voices into political reconstruction processes. Crises mustn't lead to a decline in women's role in public life, but rather that their political empowerment be a cornerstone of strengthening democracy in Lebanon. This includes strengthening protection mechanisms, increasing political parties' commitment to women's inclusion, and holding actors accountable for practices of political violence against women, to ensure a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Context

In Lebanon, political stalemate, along with the postponement of municipal elections and consecutive crises, have contributed to marginalizing women's voices and undermining their opportunities for effective participation in political life. Since the beginning of the political crisis, the country has witnessed repeated election postponements and successive government resignations, increased political polarization and deepening divisions, all of which have significantly affected women's ability to participate in the local political scene.¹

However, the 2022 elections were a major disappointment in the path of women's political representation. Despite strong popular momentum, the election process, from candidate to election results, demonstrated that active political parties did not prioritize nominating women, keeping their parliamentary representation at around 6%, a low percentage both regionally and internationally. The deteriorating economic crisis, which saw inflation reaching 200% in 2022 and 2023, increased economic pressures on women, leading many to withdraw from the political arena to focus on providing humanitarian support, especially amid worsening living conditions.²

1. Issam Kayssi, (2024), "Delaying Lebanon's Municipal Elections, Again," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

2. World Bank. (2023). Lebanon's Fragile Economy Pulled Back into Recession.

Due to this crisis, the majority of politically active women were forced to reduce their political activity to focus on meeting the basic needs of affected communities, in addition to fulfilling their job commitments, further restricting their ability to engage politically.³

In this context, the postponement of municipal elections in **May 2023** came as another blow to women who aspired to greater representation in local governance. These elections represented an important opportunity for women to increase their political influence and combat male dominance in the political sphere. However, this postponement, against the backdrop of security and political concerns, significantly weakened their participation opportunities, reflecting a form of political violence against women by depriving them of opportunities for real change.⁴

The regional crisis that began on **October 7, 2023**, and turned into an armed conflict by **September 2024**, created a new reality for Lebanese women who were active in politics and civil society. They found themselves on the front lines, shifting their focus to humanitarian efforts in providing support to war-affected communities.⁵

This report reviews the impact of the comprehensive crisis on Lebanese women, highlighting sectarian tensions and escalating violence as factors that limit their political aspirations. The gender gap, estimated at about **68%** in favor of men, and the figures indicating that **92%** of women in government positions are dissatisfied with their influence and decision-making, reflect the persistence of systemic obstacles for women even after they reach positions of power.⁶ In conclusion, this report provides policy recommendations aimed at enhancing women's participation and protecting their political gains, and highlighting the immense potential of Lebanese women in achieving political reform and reconstruction.

Overview

This report employs a methodology that combines quantitative and qualitative data, supported by previous studies, to understand the challenges hindering women's participation in politics during the war periods following the events of **October 7, 2024**. Data was collected from ten key interviews with female political activists, including two members of the Lebanese Parliament, and women in municipal positions, in addition to a survey involving 125 activists in the municipal and political fields. The data collection process was carried out from **October 15, 2024**, to **November 30, 2024**.

The selection criteria for participants in the survey and interviews focused on women active in politics, civil society, and municipal work during the crisis, including members of parliament, parties, municipal councils, and civil organizations supporting political reform and gender equality. Geographical representation was considered, with a focus on areas most affected by the war, such as Bekaa, Tripoli, and the South, ensuring diversity in age groups, including women with disabilities, to understand the impact of economic factors on political participation. The report used qualitative analysis for the interviews and statistical analysis for the survey data, aiming to measure political barriers and provide strategies to enhance women's participation, particularly in the post-war phase.

3. Kassem, Y. (2024). في السلم والحرب.. معاناة اللبنانيات لا تنتهي. Alhurra.

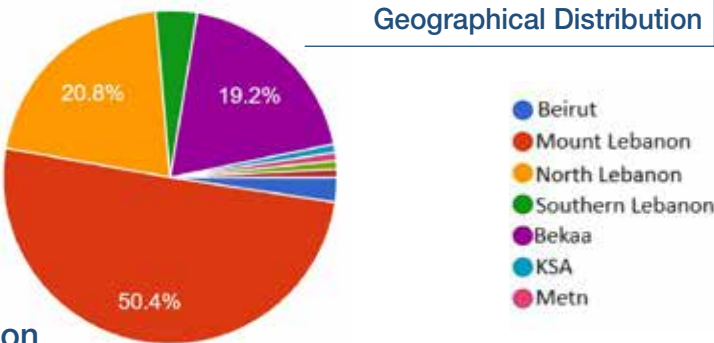
4. Khalaf, S. (2024). Delaying Lebanon's municipal elections again, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

5. UN Women. (2024). On the frontlines: Women-led organizations lead Lebanon's crisis response despite significant challenges. UN Women Arab States.

6. Majouz, M. (2024). Lebanon's economy faces severe challenges amid ongoing crises. This is Lebanon.

Results
Quantitative Data
Highlights of Quantitative Data

Section 1: Demographic Information of the Sample



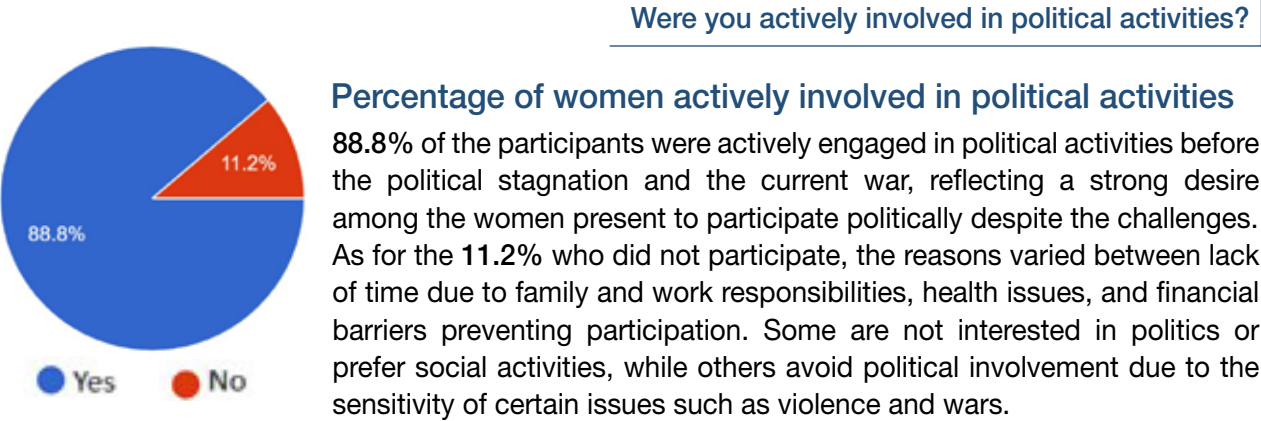
Percentage of geographical distribution

The survey was disseminated across multiple platforms to maximize its reach among women across different Lebanese regions, without applying a predefined methodology for their geographical distribution. Social media, civil society networks, and feminist groups were used to distribute the survey, allowing it to reach diverse segments of women from various backgrounds and regions. The results showed that Mount Lebanon recorded the highest percentage of participants, which may be attributed to the high population density and the availability of organizations and programs that support women's issues, making it easier to reach respondents. The North and Bekaa regions followed, where, despite economic and social challenges, a good participation rate was observed, reflecting increasing awareness and support for women's issues in these areas. The lower participation rates observed in the South, Beirut and West Bekaa may be attributed to security and economic factors that could hinder the expansion of women's support initiatives in these regions compared to others. Participants from outside Lebanon accounted for 0.8% of the total, reflecting expatriate Lebanese women's continued engagement with national issues and their willingness to contribute to women's rights initiatives, even from abroad.

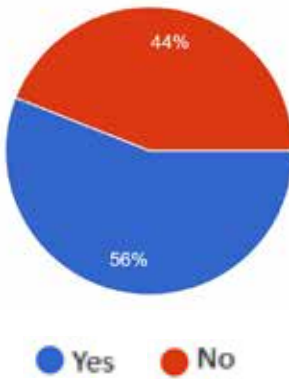
In terms of age groups, the 45-54 age group constituted the largest percentage of participants, at 40.8%, indicating their extensive experience and strong engagement in political and social participation, particularly amid ongoing crises. The participation rate varied in other age groups, with middle-aged women seeking to enhance their leadership roles, while younger groups show an increasing awareness of the importance of political participation, despite some challenges related to professional and family stability.

The low representation of women with disabilities in the study indicates additional challenges they may face in political and social participation. These challenges could stem from inadequate infrastructure, social stigma of insufficient institutional support all of which limit their broader integration into public life.

Section 2: Political participation before the political stagnation and the ongoing war



Are you currently involved in political activities?

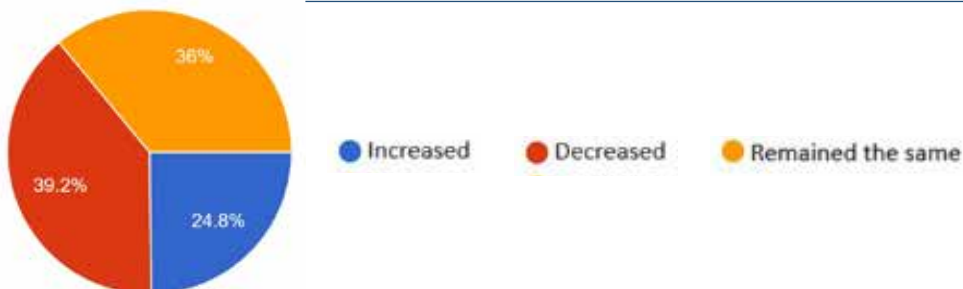


Percentage of women currently actively involved in political activities

Currently 56% of the surveyed participants are actively involved in political activities, representing a significant segment of those who remain committed to political work despite the country's security and economic challenges. When asked about their lack of involvement in political activities, the remaining 44% cited several reasons. The security situation and ongoing war were among the most prominent obstacles, while others expressed a lack of interest in politics or a preference for focusing on humanitarian issues due to the deteriorating conditions. Some explained that family and professional commitments consume most of their time, while others opted for social engagement over political participation. Additionally, Health and family related challenges emerged as further obstacles to their involvement.

Section 3: Changes in Political Participation

Has your political involvement changed since the beginning of the war?

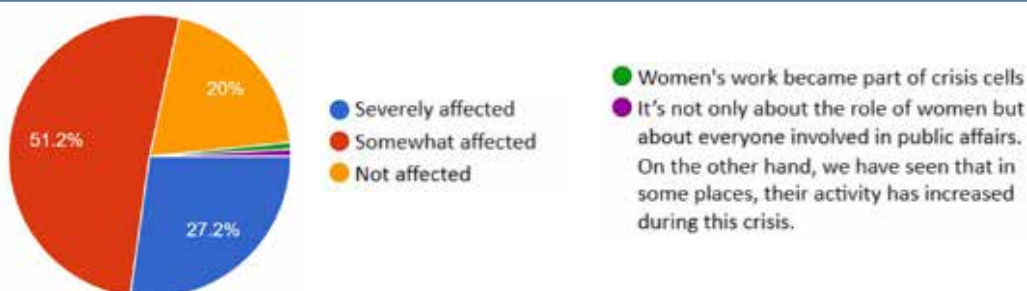


Percentage of women whose political participation has changed since the beginning of the war

The impact of war on women's participation in political activities:

- 39.2% of the participants reported that their political participation has decreased since the beginning of the war. This indicates that the difficult security conditions and the worsening economic and living situations have led to a decline in their commitment to political activities, as focusing on other daily priorities such as social work or family care has become more important.
- 24.8% of the participants indicated that their political participation has increased since the beginning of the war. This increase may reflect some women's desire to be part of the political scene, or the motivation to work for issues related to justice and equality in these difficult times. Some women also considered their involvement in relief work as a form of political participation, through which they contribute to addressing the repercussions of crises and supporting communities, reflecting an awareness of their role in achieving change at various levels.
- 36% of the participants stated that their political participation remained the same since the beginning of the war. These women may have maintained their political activity despite the conditions, and perhaps they were able to adapt to the new circumstances in a way that allows them to maintain their previous levels of participation.

In your opinion, how has the current political situation affected the role of women in political participation and activities?



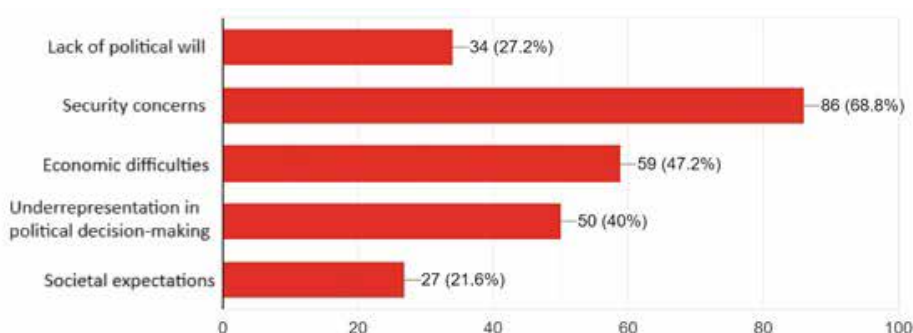
Percentage of women whose role in political participation and activities has been affected by the current political situation?

51.2% of participants believe that the political situation has somewhat affected their political participation, indicating that the current circumstances have weakened their ability to engage effectively due to shifting priorities and challenges in achieving their political goals.

Meanwhile, 27.2% reported being severely affected by political and security crises, whereas 20% remained unaffected and continued their activities. The remaining 0.8% were those whose roles were confined to relief work.

Section 4: Obstacles and Challenges

In your opinion, what are the main factors preventing women from participating politically during this crisis?



Percentages of key factors preventing women from participating in politics during this crisis

68.8% of participants believe that security concerns are the primary barrier to their political participation, as the volatile security situation and ongoing conflicts pose significant challenges that prevent women from engaging in political activities.

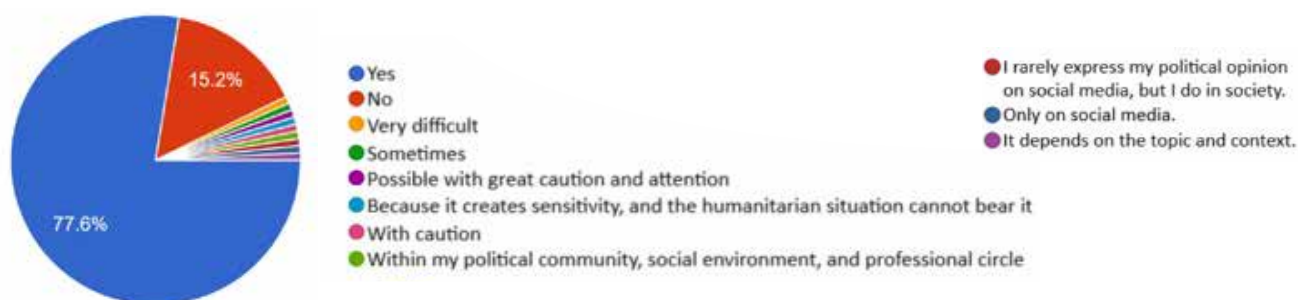
47.2% believe that economic difficulties greatly affect their political participation. The worsening economic crisis, which has led to a deterioration of living conditions, makes it difficult for women to allocate the time and resources necessary for political participation.

40% of participants point to the lack of representation in political decision-making as another obstacle hindering their political participation. The underrepresentation of women and the scarcity of female leaders can create a sense of frustration and powerlessness in political processes.

27.2% consider the lack of political will on the part of the government and political parties to be another factor contributing to the low participation of women in political life. This indicates that the political leadership may not be interested in providing suitable opportunities for women to participate in political activities.

21.6% of the participants consider societal expectations to be an obstacle to their political participation. These expectations may be related to the traditional roles that women play in society, which limit their activity and visibility in the public sphere.

Can you currently share your political views in mainstream media or within your political community?



Percentage of possibility of sharing political opinions in mainstream media or within the political community

77% of respondents said yes, indicating that the majority of women feel able to express their political views freely, despite existing challenges.

15.2% responded no, pointing to pressures or fears that prevent them from doing so.

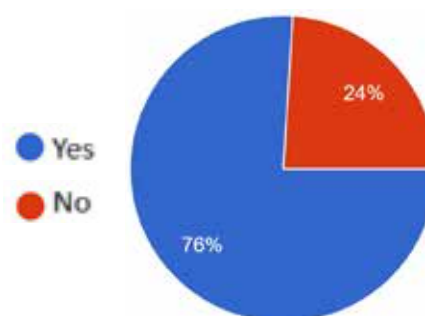
7.2% expressed mixed opinions, including concerns about caution or restriction on their expression through specific means.

Are you still expressing your opinions on social media?

Percentage of women who continue to express their opinions on social media

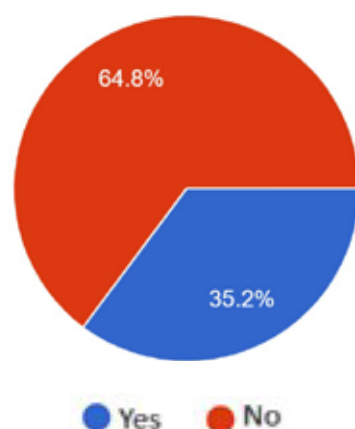
76% of women answered yes, indicating that the majority continue to express their political views on social media despite the current situation.

Meanwhile, 24% of women have stopped expressing their opinions due to fears of negative reactions, psychological stress, a shift in focus on humanitarian issues, in addition to social sensitivity and lack of trust in digital platforms.



Section 5: Political Efficacy and Aspiration

Were you planning to run in the municipal elections before they were postponed or the last parliamentary elections?

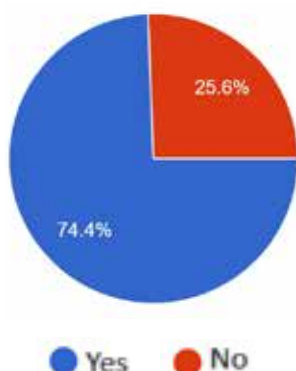


Percentage of women who planned to run in municipal elections before they were postponed or last parliamentary elections

64.8% of the women answered "no," suggesting that some may not be interested in running for office, possibly due to factors related to the prevailing economic, social, or even political conditions in the country. Additionally, the postponement of municipal elections may have dampened enthusiasm for some women or led them to delay their candidacy plans. Despite this, the results indicate that a majority of survey participants had considered running, which is a positive indicator of political readiness and a desire for change among women, despite the challenges they face.

Meanwhile, 35.2% of women expressed their desire to run for office, reflecting a strong interest in women's participation in elections at both local and national levels. This signals a growing political awareness among women and a desire to play a direct role in decision making.

Were you planning to support someone in the municipal elections before they were postponed or the last parliamentary?

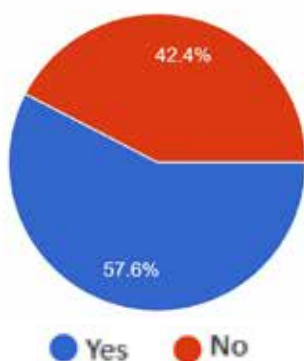


Percentage of women who planned to support someone in municipal elections before they were postponed or last parliamentary

74.4% of women had planned to support a candidate in the municipal or parliamentary elections before they were postponed, indicating a strong interest in political engagement and candidate advocacy. This reflects a high level of political awareness and a desire to influence the electoral process, whether by backing candidates who align with their values or by actively participating in election campaigns. In contrast

25.6% of the women had no intention of supporting any candidate, which may suggest a lack of confidence in the political system or the absence of candidates who represent their aspirations.

Do you intend to run in any future elections?

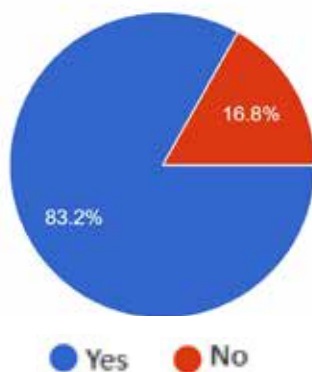


Percentage of women who wish to run in any future elections in the sample

The survey revealed that 57.6% of female respondents indicated a desire to contest future elections, suggesting a growing political awareness and ambition for active participation within the political sphere. This finding underscores a significant cohort of women aspiring to assume leadership roles and exercise decisional influence at both local and national levels.

Conversely, 42.4% of respondents did not express electoral aspirations, a result potentially attributable to a confluence of factors including perceived systemic barriers and socio-economic impediments to political entry.

Do you intend to support someone in any future elections?



Percentage of women who want to support someone in any future election

83.2% expressed a desire to support someone in any future elections, indicating their strong interest in participating in the electoral process, whether by supporting female or male candidates they believe represent their interests. This percentage reflects a strong awareness among women of the importance of influencing elections and contributing to the election of representatives who express their needs and values.

On the other hand, the 16.8% of women who did not wish to support someone may be due to a lack of trust in the electoral process or a lack of belief in the existence of candidates who align with their aspirations.

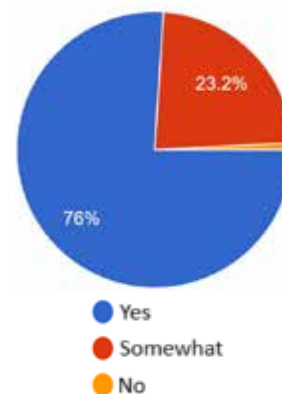
Section 6: Future Engagement and Support Needs

Do you feel ready to participate in efforts rebuilding and reforming post-conflict Lebanon?

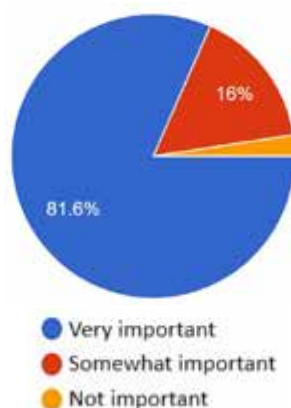
Percentage of women who feel willing to participate in efforts to rebuild and reform Lebanon politically after the conflict

76% of the women feel ready to participate in the efforts to rebuild and reform Lebanon's political system after the conflict, reflecting their eagerness to engage in the political change process. This demonstrates a strong belief in their role in shaping the country's future, rebuilding state institutions and driving necessary reforms.

Meanwhile 23.2% felt somewhat ready, which may reflect the need for greater support, resources, or capacity-building training to enhance their effectiveness. Finally, the 0.8% who did not feel ready may have concerns about the current security or political situation.



To what extent do you think the efforts of civil society and political parties are important in amplifying women's political voices?



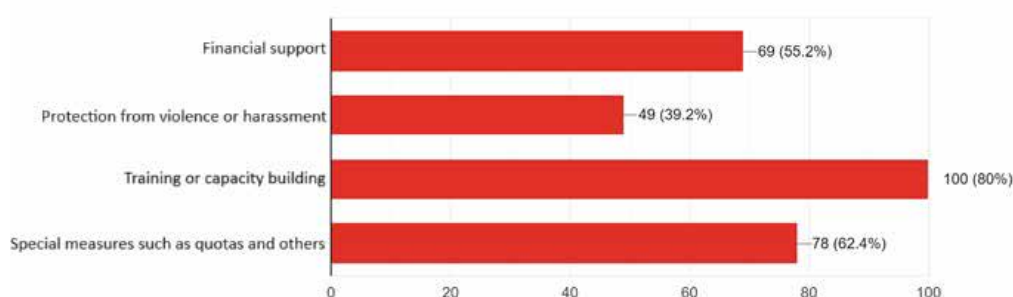
Percentage of women who believe that the efforts of civil society and political parties are important in amplifying women's political voices

81.6% believe that the efforts of civil society and political parties are very important in amplifying women's political voices. This indicates a high appreciation from women for the role of these entities in enhancing their representation in the political arena and supporting them in achieving the desired change.

The 16% who consider these efforts somewhat important may reflect skepticism or a need for more effectiveness and resources to ensure tangible results.

While the 2.4% of participants who consider these efforts unimportant may doubt the ability of parties or civil society to provide real support or achieve effective results in empowering women.

What would you like to see from political parties or civil society organizations to support women's participation in politics?



Percentage of demands women wish to activate in political parties or civil society organizations to support women's participation in politics

80% of the participants consider training and capacity-building to be of great importance, reflecting the need to increase awareness and knowledge in the political field to address challenges, and how to use protection mechanisms against violence directed at women in politics (VAWP).

62.4% of the participants see the necessity of implementing special measures such as quotas to ensure fair representation of women in political positions. Additionally, 55.2% consider financial support to be a fundamental element in enhancing women's political role, while 39.2% believe that providing protection from violence and harassment is essential to ensure a safe environment.

Survey Summary

The survey results highlight the dynamic political engagement of women in Lebanon despite challenging circumstances. While the vast majority of participants expressed a strong interest in political participation, whether through direct involvement, running for office, or supporting candidates, there has been a decline in effective participation due to ongoing crises, including economic hardships, security challenges, and political stagnation.

These factors have weakened women's ability to fully exercise their political roles.

Among these challenges, the postponement of municipal elections had a significant impact on the aspirations of some female activists who had planned to run. Many were forced to delay their electoral ambitions or reassess their political strategies, leading to frustration among some due to uncertainty about the future of the electoral process. This postponement not only hindered candidacy plans but also contributed to reducing the general enthusiasm of female activists, as it became difficult to maintain political momentum amid uncertainty about election dates.

Despite these obstacles, a significant number of women still maintain or even increase their political activities, driven by a commitment to change and gender equality advocacy. The data highlights a growing awareness among women about their potential roles in governance and decision-making, as well as the need for targeted support to overcome the barriers they face. Addressing key challenges such as security concerns, economic constraints, and societal expectations is essential to fostering more inclusive and effective participation of women in the Lebanese political landscape.

The survey participants' comments offered valuable insights and opinions that shed light on the challenges facing women in Lebanon, particularly within the political and social landscape amid the ongoing crisis. They emphasized the importance of strengthening women's economic, social, and political capacities, encouraging them to run for office and take on decision-making positions.

Participants also stressed the need for essential training, protection from violence and harassment, and the enactment of laws that safeguard women's rights and support their political aspirations.

Additionally, there were calls to organize women's blocs and enhance their roles in shaping political decisions in Lebanon. The crucial need for women's involvement in both political and humanitarian efforts especially during crises was emphasized, considering that women possess the ability to manage crises effectively. In this context, the survey also demonstrates the importance of providing moral and financial support, and amplifying women's contributions during political and social crises. While many women actively participate in political and social movements, they still require greater access to opportunities to reach decision-making positions.

Efforts to strengthen women's roles in political parties and civil society remain a priority, alongside initiatives to raise national and political awareness among women. On the other hand, participants also stressed the need to grant women sufficient time to conduct effective electoral campaigns, as this period is essential for building trust, engaging with voters, and ultimately enhancing their chances of candidacy and winning political positions.

In conclusion, the survey results reaffirm women's resilience and determination to shape the future, highlighting the need for sustained efforts to empower them as agents of change, whether by fostering their active political participation or by providing continuous support to enable them to achieve their political and social aspirations in Lebanon.

Qualitative Data

In the following sections, we will present the results of the interviews - Women in Politics. The interviews were divided into four axes focusing on the impact of political stagnation and conflicts on women's participation in political life in Lebanon. The interviews included five prominent activists, including parliamentarians Ghada Ayoub and Halima Kaakour, as well as political activists Joumana Sleilati, Lama Hariz, and Lynn Harfoush.

The participants spoke about their personal experiences and highlighted the challenges they face and which obstruct other women in Lebanon. The discussions addressed the constraints that hinder women's participation in decision-making and elected councils, focusing on key obstacles such as societal bias and lack of political support.

We would like to emphasize that, to preserve the privacy of the participants, we will not mention their answers directly, but rather we will rely on an analysis of their experiences and opinions to draw recommendations aimed at enhancing the role of women in politics, based on their experiences and observations.

Women in Politics

1) The Impact of Political Stagnation and Conflict

Amid political stagnation and ongoing conflicts, Lebanese women face complex challenges that have significantly impacted their role in political life. These challenges are represented in prevailing social norms, a male-dominated political environment, and deteriorating security conditions. Nevertheless, many women have shown a clear determination to continue their political aspirations, emphasizing that these challenges have increased their resolve to achieve their goals.

Two women indicated that their political participation remains confined to stereotypical roles associated with humanitarian and social work, while their involvement in core political issues such as negotiations and conflict resolution is met with relative disregard from society. The participants also clarified that the party environment poses an additional obstacle, as political parties continue to favor men over women, even in parties that declare their support for women's participation. On the other hand, some indicated that their parties were supportive of their political activity, allowing them to participate effectively in political movements aimed at working and contributing to resolving conflicts.

2) Political Participation

Some participants expressed that they face difficulties in expressing their political opinions for fear of adverse reactions that may be directed at them, especially in light of social and security restrictions imposed due to the exacerbation of obstacles to women's political participation amidst war and deteriorating economic and social conditions, which limits their opportunities for effective involvement in politics and decision-making. Many of them are confined to relief and humanitarian activities, which contributes to reducing their political participation opportunities. In contrast, others indicated that these restrictions did not prevent them from continuing to express their opinions and make their voices heard.

3) Opportunities, Adaptation Mechanisms, and Alternative Platforms

Despite the challenges facing women in the political sphere, opportunities and mechanisms emerge that enable them to maintain their presence and enhance their role in society. Social media has become an effective tool that helps women express their political opinions and build interaction with society, contributing to overcoming many of the social and political restrictions imposed on them. Civil society institutions and community work have also provided a space that supports and encourages women to engage in local issues that reflect their vision and political priorities. However, this may also pose a challenge for women in the absence of a clear legal path to combat violence against women in politics (VAWP). Many women hesitate to express their opinions through social media for fear of harassment or digital violence, which may limit their effective participation in public discussions and decision-making.

Participants in the interviews pointed to the pivotal role of women in reconstruction efforts and the formulation of legislation aimed at achieving equality, especially in the post-conflict phase. They emphasized the importance of strengthening cooperation with international and local organizations, as it provides support and empowerment that enhances their participation in political life and decision-making. Although social media has helped women overcome imposed restrictions, the emergency circumstances that led to a focus on relief activities instead of political work have postponed many of their political aspirations. Nevertheless, women continue to invest in these tools and opportunities to support their issues and achieve their future goals.

4) Future Prospects and Allocated Support

To ensure effective and sustainable political participation of women in Lebanon, participants considered that there is an urgent need to provide strategic support that includes:

- 1 **Independent funding:** The need to provide financial resources dedicated to supporting women's initiatives and enabling them to launch their political campaigns irrespective of patriarchal domination.
- 2 **Training and Capacity Building:** Providing specialized training programs in leadership, negotiation, and media, to empower women to face political challenges.
- 3 **Adopting Women's Quotas:** Adopting women's quotas as a temporary measure to ensure women's representation in decision-making centers
- 4 **Independent Media Platforms:** Enhancing the use of alternative media to enable women to voice their opinions away from the control of traditional media
- 5 **Support Networks:** Establishing alliances with civil society organizations to enhance women's participation in politics, and providing the necessary technical and administrative support.
- 6 **Enacting Laws to Combat Violence Against Women in Politics:** The necessity of issuing laws that criminalize political violence against women, including verbal violence, and guarantee their rights to political participation without threats or pressures



Women in Municipalities

The purpose of the interviews with five women active in municipal work and members of municipalities within their regions was to highlight the impact of periods of political stagnation and conflicts on women's participation in governance, particularly at the local level.

The interviews included Josephine Zgheib, Khadija Maouche, Ramona Geagea, Dr. Marie Haidar, and Rasha Sankar, exploring how municipalities and local governance administrations were affected by the postponement of elections, while reviewing available opportunities and obstacles facing women activists. The discussions were divided into four main axes, through which the participants explored the societal and political challenges that affect women in municipal work, while providing insights and recommendations to improve their participation in decision-making.

We would like to emphasize that, in order to preserve the privacy of the participants, we will not mention their responses directly, but will rely on the analysis of their experiences and opinions to draw recommendations aimed at enhancing the role of women in politics, based on their experiences and observations.

1) The Impact of Political Stagnation

The women who participated in the interviews indicated the significant impact of the worsening political stagnation on their effective participation in the municipal sphere in Lebanon. Despite the efforts made to enhance the role of women in political and social life, they emphasized that the intricate political and economic conditions imposed numerous challenges, prompting many of them to focus on family and community priorities instead of fully engaging in public affairs. Their opinions varied regarding the impact of repeated election postponements on their political aspirations; some participants expressed feelings of frustration and disappointment due to the reduced opportunities for achieving change; while others saw these conditions as a catalyst to enhance their participation, work on developing their skills and strategies to empower themselves. They emphasized that crises can be an opportunity to bring about tangible future change, especially when the electoral process resumes and conditions improve.

2) Barriers to Municipal Participation

Restrictions on Political Expression:

Three women indicated that they face increasing challenges in expressing their political opinions within their municipal work and on social media, whereby their voicing of critical public policies is subject to suppression and restriction.

The Focus on Humanitarian Work Instead of Municipal Duties:

Humanitarian crises drain municipal resources and focus, thereby limiting other essential services and reducing the space for women's political influence.

Lack of Support and Trust from Leadership:

Municipalities' lack of transparency and sufficient support to enhance women's participation. This weakness reflects on women's ability to achieve a clear and sustainable impact in municipal work.

The Leadership's Failure to Provide Support and Trust:

Municipalities lack transparency and adequate support to enhance women's participation. This weakness reflects on women's ability to make a clear and sustainable impact in municipal work.

3) Opportunities, Adaptation Strategies, and Future Participation

The participants considered that there are several opportunities that can be leveraged to reintegrate women into municipal work effectively. The most prominent of these include:

Reintegration into Municipal Work:

- Providing comprehensive training in leadership and crisis management to enhance women's participation in decision-making processes.
- Establishing solidarity networks among women working in municipalities to exchange experiences and offer support.
- Pushing for institutional reforms that promote inclusivity and grant women a greater role in local governance.

Mechanisms for Adapting to Current Challenges:

- Engaging in social and political initiatives to strengthen women's ties with their communities and build supportive grassroots networks.
- Forming community support networks that enable the exchange of resources and strategies to enhance resilience.
- Taking on informal leadership roles that offer women greater flexibility in facing challenges.

4) Required Support

The participants identified several key areas that need support to activate women's roles and enhance their participation in local governance. These included:

- **Provision of Financial and Technical Resources:** To support the implementation of innovative projects that are free from bureaucratic complications.
- **Creation of Communication and Support Networks:** To enable women to exchange experiences and access specialized consultations.
- **Building Leadership Capacities:** To enhance women's participation in society and governance through training in leadership and crisis management.
- **Reforming Municipal Structures to Promote Inclusivity:** Implementing gender quotas or establishing committees dedicated to women's issues.
- **Strengthening Enabling Policies for Women:** To ensure a supportive work environment that encourages women's participation in decision-making positions.
- **Encouraging Partnerships Between Civil Society and Municipalities:** To support women through collaborative programs that provide resources and expertise.
- **Incorporating Women into Peacebuilding Plans:** To ensure their representation in reconciliation processes and in fostering social cohesion.

Recommendations and Guidelines to Ensure Effective and Sustainable Female Participation in Politics and Municipal Work

A comprehensive approach should be adopted that considers the vital roles political parties and the media can play in supporting women and empowering them to reach leadership positions and decision-making roles.

1) Role of Political Parties:

Political parties play a central role in enhancing women's participation by:

- Adopting binding policies, such as the implementation of gender quotas, and encouraging parties to identify and promote women with the necessary skills and qualifications within their ranks, offering them opportunities to engage in decision-making processes and strengthening their involvement in political life.
- Actively involving women in negotiations related to reforms and peacebuilding, ensuring their representation in all relevant committees and securing equitable representation.
- Supporting women through preferential votes in elections.

2) Integration Between Media and Political Parties:

The collaboration between media and political parties can serve as a catalyst for enhancing the status of women by:

- Partnering with media outlets to highlight women in leadership roles and emphasize their impact on municipal and political work (e.g., talk shows, digital content, etc.).
- Promoting community awareness to challenge and change the stereotypes that limit women's roles. Both traditional and new media can be utilized to launch campaigns that spotlight the success stories of Lebanese women in politics and municipal work, providing them as role models for younger generations. Additionally, community events can be organized to emphasize the importance of women's contributions to local development, while involving youth in adopting issues of gender equality and supporting women in leadership positions.

3) **Role of the Media:**

The media plays a crucial role in highlighting the importance of women's contributions to politics and municipal work. Media outlets—both traditional and digital—should:

- Showcase success stories of women.
- Feature women as guests on political and discussion programs.

4) **Reforming Institutional and Legal Frameworks to Be More Inclusive and Supportive of Women:**

- Amending electoral laws to implement gender quotas that ensure better representation of women in both the parliament and municipal councils.

Regarding municipalities, it is necessary to:

- Improve the laws and regulations governing municipal work to ensure women's participation in key committees, while ensuring they are neither marginalized nor excluded from any responsibilities.

5) **Enacting Laws to Combat Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWP):**

It is essential to enact laws that criminalize violence against women in politics, including verbal abuse. These laws should provide legal protection for women candidates and elected officials, ensuring their participation in the political environment free from threats or pressures, while facilitating accessible mechanisms for filing complaints and reporting incidents.

6) **Collaboration Among Women in Politics and Municipal Work**

Collaboration among women working in politics and municipal work should be part of a broader strategy to establish support networks for women across various decision-making spheres.

7) **Establishing Dialogue Platforms**

Creating platforms for dialogue that bring together women in both the political and municipal sectors to exchange experiences and coordinate joint efforts. These platforms should respect electoral deadlines to consider women's candidacies and ensure their access to decision-making positions.

8) **Providing a Safe and Violence-Free Environment:**

- Establishing effective mechanisms in each municipal council to receive complaints from women, particularly related to discrimination or harassment, ensuring the protection of complainants and the confidentiality of information.
- Providing training for women on how to address and confront online violence.

In conclusion, the collaboration between political parties, the media, and the reform of legal frameworks can form a strong foundation for increasing the participation of Lebanese women in politics and municipal work, contributing to both local and national development and stability.

Conclusion

This study comes at a time of great complexity, as Lebanon is grappling with severe political, economic, and security crises, further exacerbated by the recent conflict with Israel, which began with the support front on October 8, 2023. The study was conducted at a critical moment, as the military conflict was halted based on a temporary ceasefire lasting 60 days, amidst uncertainty regarding the possibility of the conflict resuming after this period.

Lebanese women in this environment face dual challenges: the consequences of the accumulated crises on one hand, and the social and political restrictions limiting their active participation in public life on the other. Nevertheless, the current phase, which may witness the reconstruction of Lebanon, presents a unique opportunity to reshape traditional roles and strengthen female leadership.

To address these challenges, there is a pressing need for comprehensive reforms, including the enactment of supportive legislation such as gender quotas, and providing material and technical support for women interested in engaging in political and municipal spheres. Moreover, the adoption of empowering initiatives directed towards both women and men by political parties could lead to a tangible shift in decision-making centers.

On the other hand, the media remains a key partner in breaking societal stereotypes and promoting the acceptance of women in leadership roles. This can be achieved by highlighting women's achievements in political and humanitarian work.

However, it is essential to emphasize the necessity of enacting laws to combat violence against women in politics (VAWP). Women must be protected from all forms of violence, whether physical or verbal, in all political and municipal fields. The Lebanese legal system must include stringent laws that criminalize political violence against women and provide them with the necessary protection to participate in political life without fear of threats or ridicule.

Finally, cooperation between civil society and the government is crucial to ensure the presence of women in decision-making positions. Involving women in negotiating committees related to reconstruction and expanding their influence through collective and sustainable initiatives can be a pivotal step toward a more inclusive future. Additionally, organizing awareness campaigns that advocate for their involvement in the reconstruction and peacebuilding process would be a vital component of this effort.

Despite the challenges, Lebanese women have demonstrated their ability to shoulder responsibility and participate in peacebuilding and the reconstruction of the nation. Supporting and empowering female leadership not only contributes to stabilizing society but also underscores the importance of women's role as essential partners in shaping Lebanon's future and achieving its long-awaited revival.